

New Era Expansion Act will invest in clean energy job training

Washington, DC - Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Waterloo) introduced legislation today to authorize the Secretary of Labor to invest in clean energy job training at Iowa's community colleges. The New Era Expansion Act would build on the success of Braley's New Era Act of 2007, which established a recurring grant program at the US Department of Agriculture to provide grants to community colleges and advanced training facilities that train the next generation of agricultural-based energy professionals.

"Investing in clean energy job training is an important step to preparing Iowa's workforce for the 21st Century economy," Braley said. "In this difficult economic climate, legislation like this is key to generating job opportunities for Iowa's middle class families."

"The New Era Expansion Act allows Iowa to continue to lead the way in clean energy production by creating a workforce education program in clean energy technology. This bill is an important step toward equipping our state's workforce with the skills they need to fill clean energy production and manufacturing jobs that are being created throughout Iowa and the Midwest."

The New Era Expansion Act would authorize the Secretary of Labor to award grants to community colleges so they can establish a grant program for community colleges to start wind energy and energy efficient construction workforce training programs.

Under the bill, the Department of Labor would be charged with overseeing the implementation and scope of the training program. Funding for the program would be determined through Congressional appropriations to the Department of Labor to satisfy the demand for and requirements of the program.

In his recent budget, President Obama requested \$85 million for the Department of Labor to prepare more than 120,000 workers for work in the clean energy sector by June of 2012.

In the first year of the original New Era program, Braley was able to secure \$276,318 in two-year grants from the New Era Rural Technology Competitive Grant Program for Eastern Iowa Community College and Hawkeye Community College.